

How to improve interaction and communication between employees in Med Group home care?

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<p>This study examines the current environment in Med Group Oy home care. The specific focus is on interaction, communication and training. The objective was to both detect the weak points and improvement areas, as well as provide recommendations to the management about actions to be taken to tackle these challenges. The study does not cover the whole organization, but it is limited to home care, specifically concentrating on problems in that sector.</p> <p>The background of the topic, objective of the thesis and demarcation is presented in the main report. The third part of the study includes theories of organizational culture and HR, with the focus on organizational behavior, interaction, employee satisfaction and commitment. A fourth part consists of implementing a questionnaire, with the last chapters presenting the results and a self-assessment. The thesis process started at the beginning of 2014, when I decided on the topic. I completed the questionnaire for the thesis during the summer and finished the project in autumn 2014.</p> <p>The study was conducted through quantitative research. The data were collected through an online questionnaire, as this allowed respondents to choose the time and place that was suitable for them. The study was done during a six-month period, of which one month was used for data collection.</p> <p>During the study, challenges, especially in getting participants to meetings and training, were detected. These resulted from the lack of a supportive work community and skills, for example, the usage of different lifting techniques and devices. One step towards a solution would be to make both meetings and a larger variety of training more convenient to staff members, as well as offering certification of passing certain training levels.</p>	

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1 Introduction

This thesis is done for the commission party, Med Group Oy.

The research is conducted basis of my own experience, results of a questionnaire and with support of various chosen theories. I came up with the subject after I started to work in Med Group home care sector in spring 2013 and continued working on thesis spring 2014.

1.1 Choosing the topic

Med Group has all kinds of customers with different needs. Home care helps them in their daily activities and tasks they are not able to perform themselves. Reasons can be for example serious illness, mental disability or physical disability. One day's program could be for example to take customer out for movies and cup of coffee, next day helping customer with home chores.

In home care rarely more than one assistant is needed to work with customer and assistants don't meet each other's in daily basis. Depending on customer's condition, work can be really challenging both mentally and physically and time-to-time support of a colleague is needed. After a rough shift it benefits both helper and customer that helper is able to unburden issues with someone who understands and can support and give advises.

Like in every job, first weeks can be really challenging and especially in this kind of job where days and tasks can vary quite a lot from another and days are hardly ever similar. Also during first months, new employee is likely to decide if he is going to stay in the company or not, and that is why positive experiences and feel of support plays major role.

Time to time Med Group organizes staff meetings for employees to help them to get to know each other, inform every one of topics currently happening in the company and also trainings to keep everyone's skills up to date. Unfortunately many of these meetings have been cancelled due lack of participants and this issue has been acknowledged in the company. Med Group coordinators are responsible for new and old customers and making sure everyone gets right kind of help when needed. Coordinators

are also responsible of requiring new staff and therefore resources and time hasn't been enough to solve these issues.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The objective of this thesis is to give coordinators valuable information and right tools to improve communication and interaction between employees and help to create a work atmosphere where no one feels alone, even when working individually.

There is need for this kind of research in the company, since the number of employees and customers is growing rapidly by the end of the year and coordinators have acknowledged the problems of communication and interaction, but they don't have enough resources and time to solve them. In order to maintain good quality in customer service and to be able to provide well-trained and skilful staff in fast growing company, coordinators with the help of this research will be able to plan trainings in a way that will meet the interests and needs of the assistants in the home care sector.

The aim of this research is to help assistants in the home care sector to communicate and interact more with each other and this way to also get support from each other. Get assistants participate more in meetings and trainings, help them to perform their work the best way possible and to understand the environment of Med Group. In this thesis the initiation is described as a main topic and then lead into its implementation and importance for the company and the employee.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This first chapter brings out the reasons of choosing this topic, objectives of the study and planning the work. The second chapter describes the commission party and shortly introduces the company and its units and activities. The third chapter consists of the theoretical framework. The fourth chapter introduces the questionnaire and how the empirical data was collected. The last chapter introduces the results of the questionnaire. The empirical part was conducted by sending an online questionnaire to the employees in Med Group Home Care. Purpose of this questionnaire was to find out in which ways employees feel most comfortable communicating with each other and in

which ways meetings and trainings should be improved in order to meet the needs of the assistants, customer and the company.

First version of the questionnaire was sent only to few assistants beforehand and reason for this, was to be able to modify the questionnaire before sending it out to hundreds of recipients. Final version was sent by email and implemented by using Google Questionnaire because this helped me also to analyse the results. Online questionnaire sent by email was the best way to reach and approach assistants in the home care sector since employees don't meet each other in daily basis and internet is already used for informational letters and when monthly working hours are sent to Med Group.

- **Med Flight Finland**

Health care company that has provided international patient transports and medical assistance since 1995. It is also specialized in demanding transports of intensive care patients and premature infants in Finland and on global scale.

- **Eye care**

Provides assistance in all areas related to eye care including eye examination and treatment of different eye diseases and disorders in private eye practises.

- **Home care services**

For private customers in all ages and also for public home care service providers. Services are tailored to fit every customer's individual needs and requirements depending also on customer's personal situation.

3 Interaction and co-operation of an organization

Interaction is not just information and communication, but something more. Interaction is relationship between at least two people and activity in which the parties share and build shared meanings: information, feelings, experiences and thoughts.

It is important to understand the meaning of active and open interaction for organizations activities. Without interaction, there is no team or work community - only a fragmented group of employees, individuals. If there is a lack of regular interaction inside the organization the workers do not form a community, but a loose group, which consists of a variety of objectives and values of individuals. This can easily lead to a situation in which individuals focus their energies on personal goals and the organization's key focus is lost. Common goal in such a group is difficult to find, which is why the group and successful management of its activities is often complex.

Strength of an organization is based on nurturing and developing knowledge and skills and this requires members of the community working together and the culture of continuous mutual interaction. Without interaction, knowledge and expertise won't go anywhere and at worst, know-how and the customers run away with frustrated workers to their new jobs. When workers form a community, they build their own, shared history through working together and common goals. At its best interactive, collaborative, and positive, culture is transmitted to the client. Cooperation has many advantages also for learning. When employees feel the cohesion it gives them positive energy and helps them to learn from each other. Interaction improves social skills and strengthens learning compared to studying individually. When employees get a chance to learn new skills together with others the better they manage in future challenges of work, reduce loneliness and isolation especially in workplaces, where most of the time work is done individually. (Hätönen 1999, 59-61.)

Employees need to interact, so that they can solve problems more effectively.

If disagreements are left unsolved, it only makes things worse and the slightest problem could over time become huge. In big as well as in small companies lack of interac-

tion and communication causes problems. When many people with different cultural backgrounds and practices are working closely with each other, there could be bigger chance for conflicts. Building effective teams and dividing clear roles and responsibilities minimize the negative aspects of teamwork. In the beginning of the project it is also important to define clear objectives so that later on there won't be any misunderstandings.

3.1 Teamwork

Teamwork is important to the organization's point of view in order to get tasks and projects done. One in the team is often the team leader who directs all members to reach the company's expectations. Teamwork is important to the organization because an individual employee cannot take all the responsibility to himself. Each employee has a skill and team combines all expertise and professionalism together. The importance of teamwork is noticed especially in situations where part of the company's employees has to travel a lot and therefore is not physically present. In these kinds of situations teamwork helps communication and modern technology allows all member stay up to date with the tasks. Also, trust and reliability is important because other employees are relying on others to get things done during their absence. (Hätönen 1999, 61-63.)

An organization consists of different departments and sometimes these departments must work together as a team to meet the company's goals and objectives, despite having very different functions within the organization. Another important reason for teamwork in an organization is the different backgrounds and ethnicities of people working in a single organization. Each employee has a different background or experience, meaning each of them can perform differently on any given tasks. Teamwork is important so all employees think and perform with the same goal in mind. (Hätönen 1999, 62-63.)

3.2 Organization culture

Organization culture is difficult to define precisely because it consists of a long period of time and is transformed in continuous basis. Corporate culture refers to the entity, which consists of practices, values, communication and interaction between employees and other similar factors.

Organization culture is easier to describe as three different levels; first level is what we observe around us and how people behave towards us. This level is something you can sense right away but the deeper meaning of these behaviours is harder to understand without more knowledge of the dominant culture. Second level looks deeper into values, ethics and visions of an organization. It gives wider image on why things are done in a certain way. These two levels give now some idea of the organization culture but still there might be differences between the actions and behaviours and the actual values of the company. In order to understand the third level one must look deeper into organizations history and what has been throughout history the core values and beliefs of the company that made it successful. These are now the core elements that started to create the organization culture. (Schein 2009, 31-35.)

Culture can be found everywhere around us where group of people have enough of same experiences and in every level of an organization and hierarchy if there is enough common history. Since the roots of organization culture are so deep, it is found hard to change. It represents ways to think, feel and observe the surrounding world. There is not really right or wrong, better or worse, only company itself can say if their culture is good for their purpose. (Schein 2009, 36-35.)

Successful organization holds on to its culture very tight since it's something they believe in and something that has been proven good. Founders might even find it offensive if their culture is being questioned. Also for young organizations this is part of differencing their company from others in the market. Organization culture is clearly expressed and thought to new employees or even effecting already on the hiring process when choosing employees that are compatible with company's visions. (Schein 2009, 115.)

3.2.1 Change management

If the company is not successful, executives might want to take its culture to a closer look. Also globalization and the constant innovation of technology result in a constantly evolving business environment. Phenomena such as social media and mobile adaptability have revolutionized business and the effect of this is an ever-increasing need for change, and therefore change management.

Since organizational culture is so deep in people's attitudes and behaviours changing it rapidly could cause resistance, work slowdowns and even strikes. If company wants to change their organization culture it should go all the way to its values not just by learning new behaviors. Otherwise changes will only be superficial and not be adopted and committed fully. (Skyttä 2002, 66-67.)

Education and communication are the keys to help employees understand the reasons of change. In some cases there might be resistance because employees don't fully understand why all these changes are happening and won't see any positive outcomes they can bring.

When company does not just force through the changes and require workers to accept them, but drives them through co-operation, employees are involved in the change and feel that they have influence in it. Company could consider ways in which they can drive changes in the way that the employees don't feel that they are treated unfair, and that when decisions are made they have to just accept them no matter what. When employees feel that decisions are made fairly and in good faith considering also the interests of workers, it creates more positive attitude in the organization. Many times the situation is simply that the benefits of the change are not seen nor understood because the decisions are made in a higher level and the figures and diagrams are above of their understanding. Typical part of nature of man is to stay in comfort zone and unknown changes may be distressing and cause fear and distract familiar behaviours and patterns of action. It would be beneficial, if these issues could also be discussed with the employees and in this way to make them understand the benefits of change from their point of view. (Schein 2009 131-134.)

Before a company can start driving cultural change, need to decide what changes are necessary and in what level. Company leaders must identify those parts of the culture that are worth preserving, and to achieve this they should also look at culture as an outsiders point of view. It is also essential to the cultural change to be able to adopt new ways of thinking, this can be challenging, especially to those members who have been the founders of the company and based on their values and ways of thinking the original culture was formed. (Schein 2009 131-134.)

3.2.2 Actions and behaviours

Interaction is part of the culture in every organization. The way things are done and the way in colleagues and other workers communicate with each other in the workplace. Some companies prefer open work areas, and the interaction can be sensed already when stepping into the office. Without visible offices the hierarchy is not necessarily something you can see right away. Assistants and managers are on the same premises and, therefore, the company's directors are easily approachable. Company like this could expect more interaction and tolerance from its employees and open conversations where feedback is given also to the management. (Schein 2009, 59-60.)

In some companies the management workspaces are located on the top floor of the building and this placement itself creates the impression of a hierarchy, and that the managers are above others and that is where all the big decisions are made.

In case assistants wanted to talk to the management of some problem he might have to talk to his supervisor first and who then decides, if it is necessary to go to the management or not. Companies like this can have smaller problems left unsolved since the employees on the so called ground level are afraid to raise them up. (Schein 2009, 59-60.)

When a new employee starts in a company, it takes a while to get inside the culture. Employee is searching his place in the company; what is the proper way to dress, how to speak to the management, the manner in which meetings are discussed and for example, how feedback is given. (Schein 2009, 58.)

3.2.3 Employee engagement

Employee engagement is a relationship between employee and the organization. An engaged employee is one who is fully committed by and enthusiastic about their work and so takes positive action to further the organization's reputation and interests.

Employee can be committed to his own career, work assignments, work community or organization but in most cases people are more committed to feelings and experiences than things. Engagement to organization and working community is more strongly based on feelings because this is how you engage to people and relationships. It is possible of course to be committed to career and work assignments as well as work community but in these cases it is easier to move to another company after better job opportunities when you don't have to leave behind anything valuable. (Skyttä 2002, 46-47.)

When an employee is committed to the job, he is also likely to be more motivated and more interested of the company's future than employee who is not satisfied.

Disengaged employees can drag down others and impact everything from customer service to sales, quality, productivity, retention and other critical business areas.

Companies with high level engaged employees also had higher level of customer satisfaction, higher profits, they were more productive and had less accidents than other companies. True engagement to company can be achieved only when individual has freedom of choice and opportunity to decide about it. Individual must be able to get to the level of his own attitudes and values and mirror them to ones that company represents. (Skyttä 2002, 47.)

3.2.4 Values

When defining values we normally talk about things that individual see valuable, things such as freedom, honesty and responsibility. We often see our values very absolute and not something we are willing to change at least not very easily and this is also why they are seen as very stable and permanent. Values are thought to us since our early years and they are things we have grown with and they are part of our personality even.

When asking about someone, he might be known as this "really honest person" among

his friends or in his work community. So values really define us and tell other people who we are and what are the things we believe in.

Values are the fundamental beliefs of a person or organization and the guiding principles that control behavior and action. They can help people see right from wrong and can help companies to determine if they are on the right path and fulfilling their business goals. In the very beginning when company is set up, its founder or founders think carefully what are the values they believe in their company. These decisions are now the foundation of their business. (Schein 2009, 31-33)

There are many different types of core values as there is many type of businesses as well but without their values company would be just left as undefined. Employees want to know what kind of values their workplace is representing and if they are any similar to their own. When an organization writes down its core values, it lays out its expectations of behaviors for the members of the organization. In an ideal situation, individual and company are guided by the same values, but sometimes individuals may be more likely to pursue behaviors that match their own value systems without a written guide of organizational values. These behaviors may not be in the same line with the ones company has set, and they may not be ones the company wants to encourage. Smaller organizations can confront actions that don't line up with their values more easily than large organizations. (Schein 2009, 34-36)

Some companies choose to market their business through their values and some companies are fine with just having them on the wall. Value statements also serve as a reference point for community members outside the organization. They enable them to understand the beliefs and principles of the organization. They give basic information about how the organization operates and about its perspectives on ethical problems.

3.3 Human resource management

Human resources management is the function in organization, which is responsible for the personnel planning. HR management roles and responsibilities are developed and grown over the years. When at the beginning of Human Resources took over recruit-

ment, payroll and legal affairs now HR is specialized to take care of the staff training and development, health and safety issues, recruitment, rewarding and other employment related matters. An organization cannot build a good team of working professionals without good Human Resources. In today's business environment, the personnel is one of the biggest competitive advantages in the market and HR management has a big role in this. Human resource management has different roles in the organization, and HR professionals could also be called as consultants of a company who give guidance on how to strategically manage people as business resources. (Dessler 2009, 20-21.)

3.3.1 Workforce planning

Systematic definition and analysis of what an organization is going to need in terms of the size, type, and quality of workforce to achieve its goals. It determines what mix of experience, knowledge, and skills are required and what kinds of steps are needed to get the right number of right people in the right place at the right time.

Workforce planning is something that cannot be done fully mechanically. It is most of all forecasting, planning and interaction between human resource management, firms finance and other executives on what skills and competencies of the company will need in the future to implement its strategy and achieve its objectives.

When making personnel planning one of the biggest decisions is always if recruiting candidates from inside the company or outside. If a company decides to take advantage of the company's current employees it needs to take into account their potential training needs so that they can perform their tasks in their new position. The advantage of using current employees is that if they are already familiar with the company and its practices and training doesn't have to be as thorough as with new employees, which saves the company's time and money. (Dessler 2009, 98-99.)

If company decides recruit outside company, it first needs to decide what sources to use and then through that see the availability. Outside applicants can be good if the company needs an outside perspective and fresh new ideas but all of this depends en-

tirely on what the company seeks and what are the goals. Workforce planning always starts with very simple but important part, forecasting. With basic tools like trend-and-ratio analysis, company can estimate its recruiting needs and it is crucial that company knows the demand of its product or service. (Dessler 2009, 98-99.)

Trend analysis Is basically the practise of collecting information and figuring out a pattern, *a trend* in it. Trend analysis is a way to predict future events but most importantly company needs to first study the past years to find out the pattern and to spot the employment trends that might continue into the future. When studying past years of company's employment levels it is better to study too many than too little. If possible at least 5 years or more is good but if company is still new in the market forecasting is more about counting revenue and estimating the size of the staff needed to achieve that. (Dessler 2009, 75.)

Ratio analysis is information contained in a company's financial statements. Ratio analysis is based on financial statements like the balance sheet, income statement and cash flow statement and then making forecast based on the ratio between them. Ratio analysis is used to evaluate various aspects of a company's operating and financial performance and number of employees required. (Dessler 2009, 76.)

3.3.2 Recruitment

Basically recruitment refers to a process where employee is selecting, attracting and appointing suitable candidates for either permanent or temporary jobs in the company. The process include for example a job advertisement for publication, reviewing job applications, interview applicants, and possibly testing, but recruitment is also however much more than just that. (Dessler 2009, 98-99.)

Recruitment should also meet the needs of company's strategic plans and be well planned concerning when and how its done and also which sources are used. Successful recruitment is based on the organization's resource needs and the vision and the strategy of the company, defines recruitment policy. When recruiting new employees company also decides what they are expecting from the new employee and what they can offer. Candidate needs to know what kind of tasks and what type of area of re-

sponsibility he carries, if the position is temporary or permanent and what kind of salary is offered. Also company will have to consider what kind of personality the new job and work community is expecting from the candidate. There are many ways of recruiting and company will choose the best one for its needs.

When company is selecting candidates from existing workforce it is called internal recruiting. This might be the case when company wants to promote someone, offer career development opportunity or simply to just use the existing knowledge and know-how their existing employees have. When recruiting internally company can save money and time when new employee already has the basic knowledge of the company and how things are done and training can focus only on preparing the person to his new position. There is definitely good sides in both internal and external recruiting, when internal gives career and promotion opportunities to employees already existing in the company, external recruiting will bring new and fresh ideas. All these decisions will have influence in the organization culture and employee engagement. If company for example always hires director outside the company, how much that will effect on the motivation and attitudes of employees already existing in the company and their career development goals. (Kauhanen 2010, 71-73.)

3.3.3 Training

Systematic staff training and development is an important part of every work place. Each employee should have up to date skills and know-how in order to perform their work well. The company's objectives and achievements are directly linked to the skills of the personnel and, therefore, also on the market this is a significant competitive factor. By putting time and effort on training and development, company ensures that they have skilled staff also in the future in the constantly changing markets. New technology is used in companies all the time, and without training their staff how to use it, they might not get all the necessary benefit out of it, also international organizations need multilingual staff in order to communicate and make business with foreign companies. Training and development helps to improve interaction and communication between different departments and through this also to motivate and create better work environment. It is beneficial that company determines what training is required

and defines the target group for the training, is it something for everyone in the company or just for certain department or people. This way training can be planned more detail and is more useful.

When organizing training for the whole work place topics can be for example something related to work environment and general atmosphere and if training would consider new technology only one department uses, there is no point asking everyone in the company to learn this. (Hätönen 1999, 72-73.)

Before getting started company has to decide in which way training is implemented and from whom they buy this service. Markets are changing and also training methods are influenced by new trends. The traditional classroom training has been complemented with other methods like training CDs, email classes, online learning, blended learning and online university degrees. Since technology is developing all the time, these new learning opportunities are here to stay. As useful as new technology and language learning are for companies, they should not forget the basics such as training for improving teamwork. Working as a team is not a skill everyone automatically has and employees might need reminder on how to listen and cooperate with others. Simple outdoor training can be good way to build up team spirit and teamwork and also brings variation to typical office days. (Dessler 2014, 172.)

3.3.4 Rewarding

Reward management is one of the main areas of responsibility of HR and it will ensure that the company's employees are rewarded fairly based on the value they create. It's not just the financial recognition, but also by the fact that employees contribution to the company is noticed, and employee is given the opportunity to develop their work, to get more responsibility, or even a promotion. In the ideal situation rewarding system is sending just the right kind of message to staff, what kind of behaviour and performance is rewarded and what they need to do to achieve this. This also motivates others and helps them in their work engagement when they see what is worth striving towards. This also has the benefit the company when highly motivated staff stays in

the company and if the rewarding system works it also attracts those kinds of employees that organization needs. (Armstrong 2007,1-4.)

When an employee feels that their work performance has been noticed and that he is an important part of the company, it increases the employee engagement and also the potential talents can be spotted more easily. Although bonuses and promotions surely are appreciated among employees, company should not underestimate the simple praise and comments on the good work. It may also be that this is not something employees often ask or require the same extent as, for example pay rise and therefore is easily forgotten or not considered as valued.

People want to succeed and importance of work grows when we get to hear where have we been successful. When an employee feels that his effort is appreciated, it encourages him to continue the good work, do it even better and also give a good feedback to others. (Ahonen, Lohtaja-Ahonen 2014, 18-23.)

3.3.5 Orientation

Orientation refers to the process when a new employee is introduced to the company, its activities, rules, job description and he becomes familiar with the people going work with as well as employer and work partners. Orientation is part of socializing process in which employee adopts organizations attitudes, patterns of behaviour and expects of the department. Different companies also have different orientation programs for new employees. Some companies for example only provide comprehensive printed information package including general information of practices, rules, health issues, job benefits and other regulations when other organizations also organize specialized orientation days for new employees. (Dessler 2014, 182-183.)

Orientation days and meetings are also useful when companies want to link new employees to each other and help them to socialize. This is good way to low the barriers for future interaction especially if work is something mostly done individually and employees don't meet each other in daily basis.

When orientation is done well it newcomer should feel welcome and he should now have the basic information of the company like values and culture as well as history and vision of the future. Technology can be also helpful when orientating new people for example managers. With the help of discs or digital assistants company can provide new manager all the information he needs to know like key contact information, images and videos and discussions. Some companies prefer informational web pages for this purpose. (Dessler 2014 182-183.)

4 Conducting research

The research part of this thesis has been conducted by using quantitative method. The choice of method is influenced by the fact that the aim was to reach a large number of workers at the same time, and a personal interview for example, wouldn't have been possible. The aim was to find out employees opinions and thoughts of the current situation concerning trainings and interaction with other employees in home care. The questionnaire was sent to the Med Group coordinators and they sent inquiries to the employees, who work in the home care sector. Invitation and direct link to participate to the survey was sent by e-mail. In Med Group it is common to send information of trainings and other matters concerning the company via email and this is why sending invitation to the questionnaire by using email was safe choice to reach all the employees.

4.1 Collecting data for the questionnaire

Questionnaire survey method has many good sides including its flexibility. Questions can be sent without actual contact with the author. The defendant also has the option to choose the right moment to respond. Since it is not an interview situation, tone of voice or facial expressions won't have effect on the answers of the defendant. On the other hand same things can be said as weaknesses of this method. When researcher and the respondent are not in the same place there may be a lack of clarity with regard to the query. The defendant may for example misinterpret the questions and the defendant or the researcher cannot ask for clarification. Often, the questionnaire sent out will not have the desired number of answers and it has to be sent more than once. (Aaltola J. & Valli R. 2001, 101-102.)

The survey, which has ready-made answer options, is easier to handle and analyse. Results can be presented in diagrams and this kind of method is necessary in the case of a larger number of respondents. The survey will also give clearer instructions on what the answers sought, such as a defendant's gender, opinion or habits. It is also easy to see answers directly linked to the question and there will be no misinterpretation (Fink, 2002, 36 – 37.)

Very common layout for the questionnaire is to use the ordinal measurement. This style gives defendant a claim and he must assess the validity of the claim, for example, a scale of 1-5. The typical response is scaled, for example, is excellent, satisfactory, good, fair, poor. The preparation of queries is important to consider response options, as well as consider the option to add, "I don't know". To give opportunity for neutral response in the questionnaire should be considered according to the respondents. Many of the survey authors think such an option would give the defendant change not to think about the issue and just pass the question. For this reason, it is good to run first a trial questionnaire for only few recipients and see how they respond. (Fink, 2002, 52 – 57.)

In queries it is important taking into account which end of the scale is the first choice, whether it is negative or positive. This is particularly important when doing a face-to-face interview but also when defendant is answering to a survey. If a question is difficult it is best to put a negative answer to the first option, so that the defendant won't have a problem to answer truthfully. Also when developing order for the responses it is important to consider whether it is essential from the perspective of the defendant. If the respondents don't experience issues important in their own lives the order of the options is not as important. (Fink, 2002, 58.)

In attachment 1, one can see the questions and the structure of the survey in three parts. In the survey 4-point answer scale was used: strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree and completely agree and reason for this was to leave the option out where respondents won't take a stand at all. The aim was that the defendant would have to decide whether they more satisfied or dissatisfied with the matter asked in each case. In this way it is possible to get better understanding of the overall situation and provide concrete results presented to the client.

At the end of the both two section "*Koulutukset*" and "*Työkaverit*" respondents had to leave free-form answer, their comments and/or improvements. This was compulsory because it is crucial that ideas and constructive criticism is also heard from the employee point of view and since it was compulsory respondents saw that their opinions are seen very valuable.

Purpose of these questions was to get an overview of the company's situation from the employee's point of view. The questionnaire was applied around the issues of training and interaction & communication with other employees. The aim was also to compare, if the things are connected to each other and whether improving one thing is also improvement in the second case and other way around. How does the fact, that the trainings are held in notable distance away from the city centre, affect on the number of participants? If employees would receive a certificate from the trainings, would that attract more participants? Is support of colleague needed and would more participants in trainings, also improve interaction between employees.?

4.2 Quantitative research

Quantitative research or quantitative research is called by many names, such as the hypothetical-deductive, experimental and a positive study. A main feature of this research method is that subjects or group of persons are investigated. Sample group is chosen and research is conducted with them. It is essential that the results can be presented numerically and graphically. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2000, 129.)

Typical in quantitative research is that the results of the research are received either in percentage or graphically and one must be able to analyse them. Often quantitative research refers to the previous studies and results are compared with them. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2000, 129.)

4.3 Validity and reliability

Reliably and objectively are important for the study as well as keeping in mind the validity of the study. These can be measured with reliability and validity. Reliability means the reliability of the study. It can be measured in different ways, for example same studies of the same person made by different researchers and then comparing if the results are similar.

Validity tells whether the query succeeded in the setting. How well does the survey helped to detect the desired thing, and whether the respondents understood the ques-

tions in the same way as the questioner wanted. It is possible that the survey implementers can draw their conclusions to the direction they want, and therefore in the end it is good to think whether the replies are credible or not. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2009, 231 – 232.)

Questionnaire was sent to 300 recipients and 49 of them took part. Time to respond to the questionnaire was given two weeks and after the first week coordinators sent a reminder to employees and requested persons who have not yet responded to the questionnaire to answer it within a week. Two weeks was enough to answer to the survey since it was very short and it took only five minutes to answer. The e-mail, with a link to the survey, pointed out that all replies are confidential and that everyone can answer anonymously. Only employee's who work in the Med Group's home care sector answered the questionnaire, the coordinators did not take part.

The survey consisted of three parts. The purpose of the first part was to determine the participant's age, gender, how long have been in the company and what is their education. The second part focused on training and if employees see the benefits of training in their daily work, as well as is training diverse enough. With the invitation link, employees had instructions to answer questions concerning training, even though they wouldn't have had taken part to any yet. Reason for this was that both opinions were equally valuable, from those who already have seen the training and from those who for some reason chose not to go. The third part consisted of interaction between employees, whether there is enough and in which ways employees prefer to interact with co-workers. In the end of last two parts, was a field for comments and suggestions for improvements. This field was compulsory because it was important for the purpose for this questionnaire that the comments and improvement suggestions come directly from the workers themselves, and also that they feel that their opinions are valuable because the box could not passed without considering if to write "nothing to add" or actually give a comment. Making this comment field compulsory was good decision because the defendants have clearly put the their time and thoughts in this section and only 9/49 and 10/49 did not give any suggestions or comments. Many had responded to this section with a long answer and judging by the responses, this was a good channel for them to give honest feedback, ideas and suggestions for improvements.

5 Results of the research

First part of the questionnaire was to find out basic information of the respondents (questions 1-3) there were 49 respondents to the survey of whom 43 were women and 6 men. Gender distribution was therefore, clearly a female-dominated.

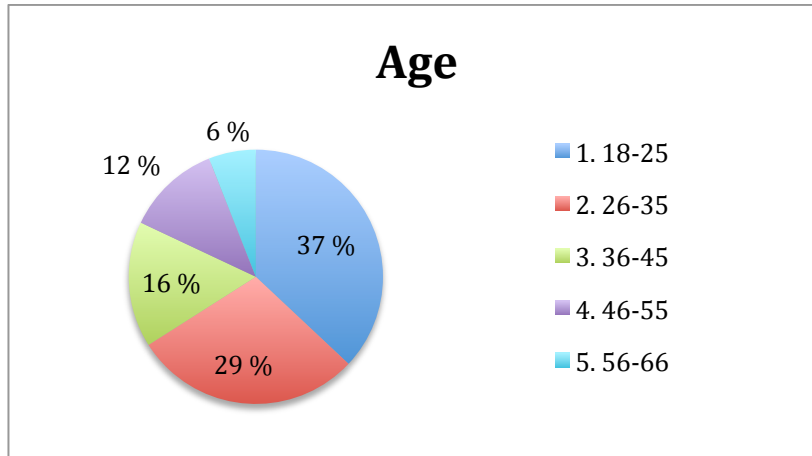


Chart 1. Age distribution

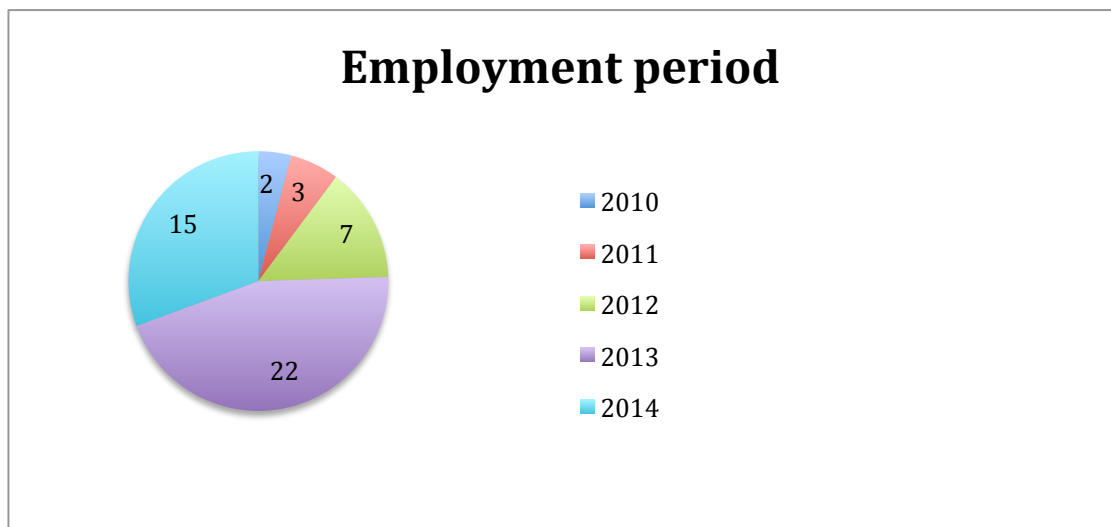


Chart 2. Employment period

In the Chart No.1 we can see the age distribution of the respondents. Major of them, 37% were 18-25 year old and 29% were 26-35 year old. When comparing this to the information on when respondents have started in company (Chart 2) it is easy to see the connection between the majority of young respondents and years worked in the company, for example 22 of the respondents have worked in the company since 2013.

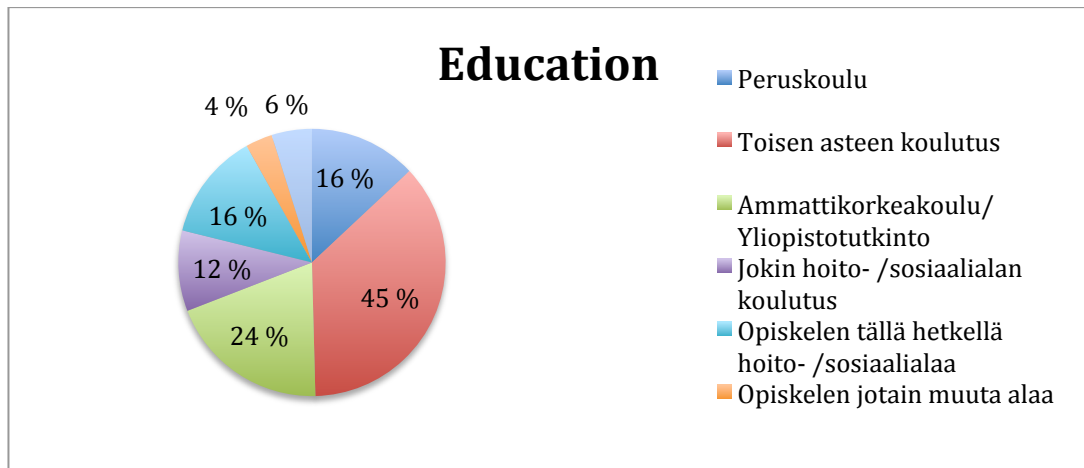


Chart 3. Education

When looking at the chart No 3. we can see that 28% of respondents either have studied or are now studying in the field of health care or social services.

Second part of the survey consisted of 10 questions or claims concerning training. Last one was blank box for comments and suggestions. First claim was to find out if employees feel that company is organizing enough training. 14 % of respondents strongly agreed and 43% somewhat agreed that there is enough training and rest 43% didn't agree fully with this.

Second claim of the survey asked if employees think that the level of training corresponds the demands of their work. Results were surprisingly similar; 51% either fully or somewhat agreed that level is good enough and rest 49% somewhat or strongly disagreed.

Question No.3 gives more information of the general situation with training.

Of the respondents 67% had not taken part in training sessions at all and only 33% said once or several times. (Chart 5)

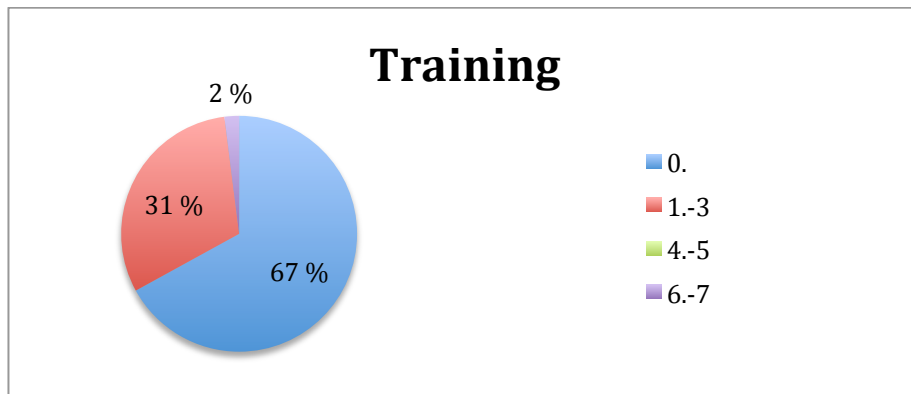


Chart 5. How many times employee has taken part of training

Question No. 3 reasons for not participating were that training is organized too far

22% and 29% said that the reason is that training is unpaid.

22% of the respondents said reason is either lack of information or lack of interesting trainings. 35% said reason is something other than mentioned above.

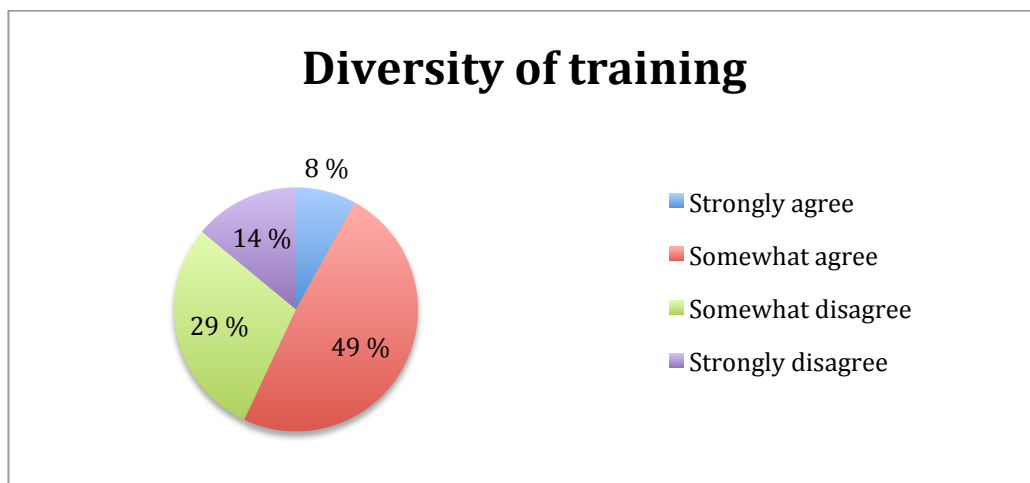


Chart 7. Is there enough diversity in training

Next questions No.4 was to find out more about general opinions of training.

When asked if they think trainings are diverse enough, over 50% somewhat or fully agreed (Chart 7)

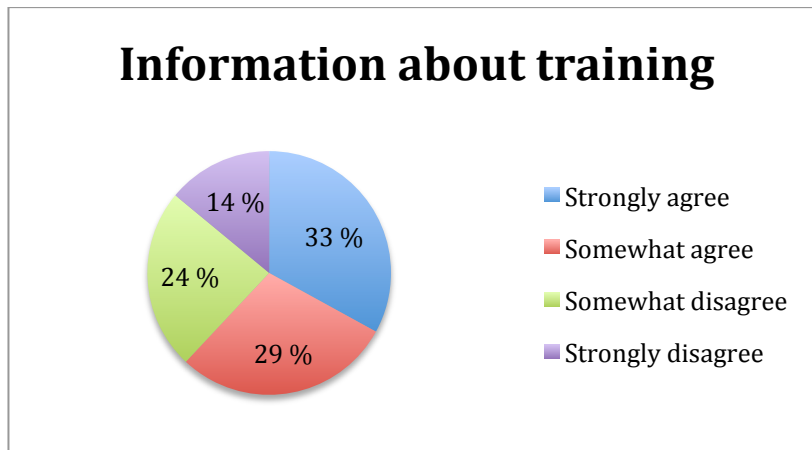


Chart 8. Does company give enough information of training beforehand

When asked if employees get enough information of training beforehand 62% agreed fully or partly. (Chart 8)

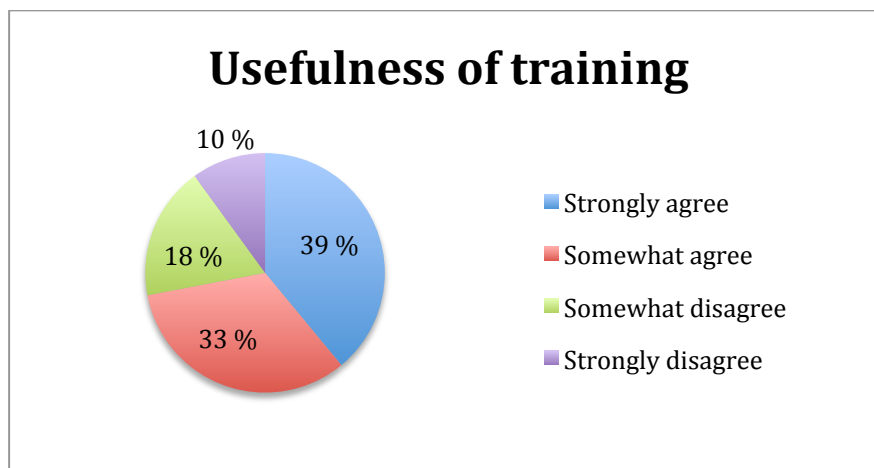
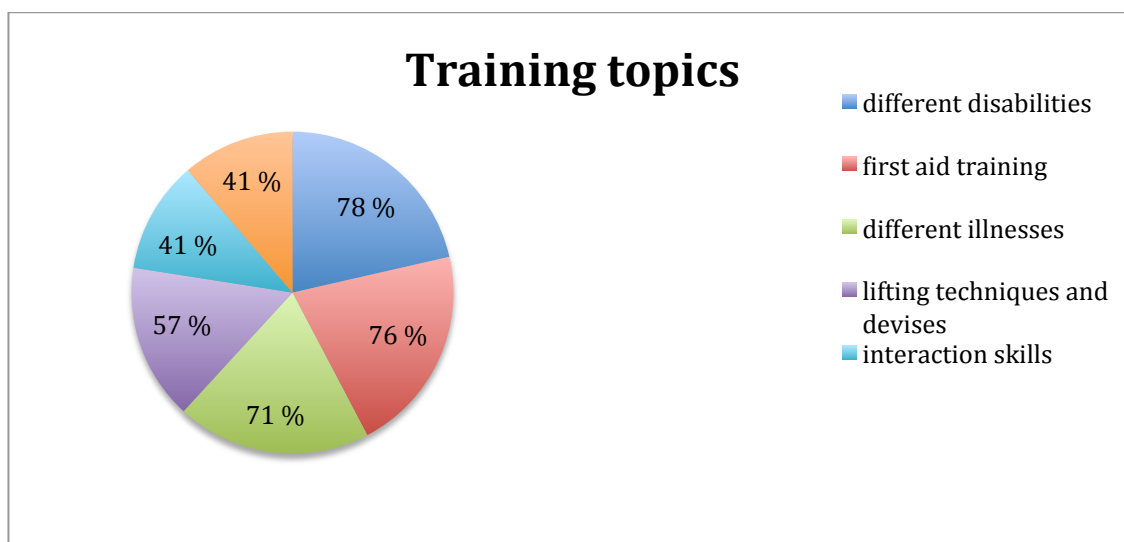


Chart 9. Does employee find training useful in daily job

In question No. 7 when asked if employees found training useful in their daily work over half of the respondents either somewhat or strongly agreed (Chart 9)

Even though there was noticeable amount of employees who had not taken part of training, general opinion of training is more positive than negative and employees find them useful. When in question No. 8 was asked if employees would like to have certificate from training 96% said yes.

Results of question No.9 are interesting when comparing results of the Chart 3. When asked if employees feel that company is organizing enough training more than half agreed. When asked which trainings employees would find interesting, as one can see from the chart below, there was many new ones since only first aid training has been arranged before.



9. **Chart 10** which of these following topics would the employee like to have more information about, regarding training

Last question on part two was a blank box where respondents were able to write their comments/improvements. This part got surprisingly long answers and only 10/49 didn't give any suggestion or comment. Also this part gave more perspective on earlier answers and it was easier to see reasons for why person answered in a certain way. Overall opinion was positive and there is clearly need for more customized and planned training. Employees felt that if they would know well in advance when training is organized they could plan better when to take part.

“Koulutuksia tapahtuu harvoin. Olisi hyvä että tehtäisiin esim. kalenteri lukuvuodelle, jotta itse voisi suunnitella, mitä koulutusta tarvitsee ja varata omaan kalenteriin ajan hyvissä ajoin.” (Thesis survey, question No.11, comments/suggestions)

Also new ideas for training were presented, for example there was request for training that would deal with different ethical dimensions of home care and personal assistance. Request for more diverse training that would meet the demands of different customer needs was also mentioned as well as need for guidance and chance to unburden issues

of challenging times at work;

“Henkilökohtaisen avustajan työ on sekä itsenäistä, joka on osin hyvä asia, mutta myös kovin yksin jää hankalissa tilanteissa. Monesti työpaikalla, esimerkiksi asuntolassa tai toimintakeskuksessa ei ole aikaa purkaa mieltä painavia asioita henkilökunnan kanssa. Kaipaisin työnohjausta ja niin sanottua purkua omaan työhöni, jotta jaksaisin paremmin työssä haastavina kausina.” (Thesis survey, question No.11, comments/suggestions)

Training and development is an important part of every job, but it is particularly important to the health care where skilled and trained staff is a prerequisite for the customer's well being. In home care there are all kinds of customers; young and old, as well as their life situation and state of health varies greatly. One place assistant is only needed to help in cooking and cleaning a few times a week while another customer may need assistance in their daily activities and to be completely dependent on the presence of helper. This is why it is very important that the staff have sufficient information about different types of diseases and their treatment and medication, the development of the injuries, the necessary assistive devices and their orthodox use. It is also good that the assistants have the necessary first aid skills. It may also be that the client's illness or health condition is still the new to customer himself and his family. In these kinds of situations would be good to get a job coaching on the side so that the assistant can provide the right kind of support and understanding of the situation. When the staff is equally knowledgeable and trained it adds company's credibility in the eyes of customers. Although some of the staff might be, for example, health care students, and some do not, all the basic skills should still be at the same level and the company's role is to ensure that this is happening.

Systematic staff development ensures that the company has the right people in the right places at the right time and that they have the right skills and capabilities to do the work that is appropriate for the company (Hätönen 1999,7)

The personnel's expertise to determine the ability of the company to achieve its objectives. The company's operating environment, the increasingly tough competition in the market, so the company inner resources have also become an important competitive factor. When the tasks change also the requirements change, knowledge is kept up to date, and at the same time acquire new tools for learning.

Part three of the questionnaire consisted four questions or claims and blank box for comments and suggestions concerning interaction and communication between employees in the home care sector. (Questions 1-4)

First claim (Question No.1) was to find out if employees feel they have enough interaction with their colleagues and 67% of that respondents felt that they don't have enough interaction. Results were similar in next question (Question No. 2) when asked if employees feel they get enough support from their colleagues and 68% felt they don't get enough support.

Question No.3 asked in which ways employees prefer to interact with their colleagues (Chart 11.) and 29 of the respondents answered that they would like to interact with their colleagues in trainings. 21 said they would like to meet their colleagues during an relaxing and informal sports day, organized by the company and 20 said formal training combined to sauna evening would be nice and 9 said they would prefer just informal sauna evening with colleagues. Only 8 replied they don't want to meet their colleagues in their free time at all.

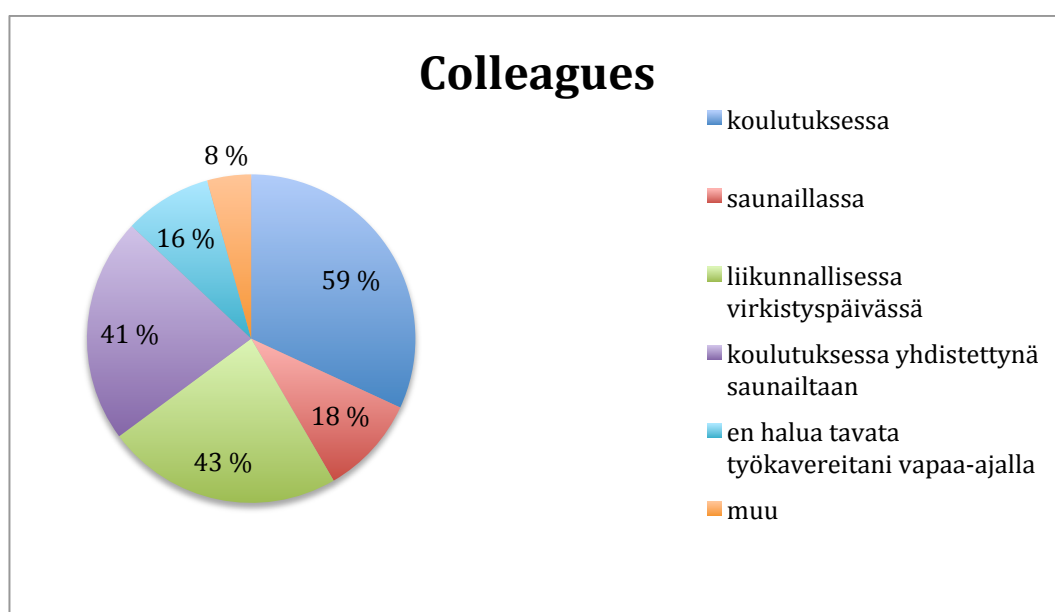


Chart 11. In which ways employee prefers to interact with colleagues

Last question Nro.4 was a blank box where respondents could leave comments and improvements concerning interaction and communication with employees.

This was a positive surprise as well as the comment box in the training part.

Answers were long and it was easy to see that employees felt that this is good way to get their opinions heard.

Like the comment box answers as well as answers to questions number 1 and 2 showed there is definitely need for support of a colleague and possibility to discuss work related matters with someone who understands;

“Itse toivoisin mahdollisuutta keskustella kokemuksista! Tässä työssä tunnen olevani melko yksinäinen puurtaja.”

“Olisi mukavaa pitää enemmän yhtä ja tuntea itsensä osaksi ryhmää joka puhalttaa yhteen hiileen.”

“Kerran tein töitä kahden muun avustajan kanssa samalla keikalla, mikä oli mukavaa. Kerrankin sai työkavereilta tukea työajalla”(Thesis survey, question No.4, comments/suggestions)

Also few respondents, who didn't want to meet their colleagues at all, explained reasons for their answers in comment box. Reasons for this were for example that they felt that customers and staff in the facilities/ group homes already are their colleagues or that this is only a part time job them. Interaction within the work community and co-workers is important. Especially when in home care assistants work mainly alone and depending on the customers condition the work can be very lonely and challenging time to time. Others also make friends with the customer but the truth is that the customer is, however, the customer and the employee should keep the relationship purely professional. In an ideal situation, co-worker offers help, support and encouragement, and possibility to discuss of ideas and thoughts job is dealing with.

Traditionally it has been assumption that man is solely responsible for their work and their actions. Now, it is not considered enough anymore. When putting time and effort on developing co-operation and interaction it also gives the opportunity to develop new kind of organization culture. The feeling of togetherness creates positive energy and team members learn from each other. The interaction improves cognitive and social skills and increases mental performance and enhances the learning compared to

working alone. The most important thing would be that each member of the work community would feel approved and important. Everyone would appreciate each other's work, and strive to do their best from achieving common goals. It is also essential that the flow of information is clear and fluent and, therefore if there were any problems they would be solved constructively together. (Hätönen 1999, 60-61)

6 Conclusions and recommendations

Results of the survey point out that the opinion of the training courses is generally positive. Respondents feel training would help them in their daily work, and there are many situations in which is perceived that additional information of different illnesses or disabilities would be useful for example when meeting new customer. However, it became clear that the general knowledge employees have of trainings has been quite low and so far trainings haven't been interesting or useful enough.

When a company hires several new employees at a time, it would be good if they could organize so called start-up info. This would be a good way to bring the new employees together and at the same time provide information about the company and the work. Also majority of the respondents thought that offering certification of passing certain training levels for example first aid training, would be a good thing.

Since in the home care the daily hours can vary quite a lot every day, it would be beneficial if the coordinators could make a list of the various training courses for example months ahead and, therefore, workers would have more freedom to choose the time and the training that would fit their current job description and schedules the best.

Employees also hoped that the ethical aspects of work would be discussed more and possible have training regarding this subject. Many workers face in their daily work issues such as client's self-determination, which may not have fully clear right or wrong answer and that is why it would be good, to discuss in advance and share thoughts on the matter.

The second part of the questionnaire concerned the interaction and communication of the employees in the Med Group Home Care.

The survey received responses where workers felt that it would be nice if there would be someone to discuss work-related things with, and someone who understands.

The coordinators are perceived more as supervisors, who they do not want to bother with their own matters, even if they are important.

Job description varies a lot depending on the customer's condition and illnesses. Some of the employees feel that the customer or the group home workers are also like colleagues who they can talk with. When some of the workers feel like they are all alone and not being able to discuss experiences and thoughts with anyone.

Therefore, it would be good that if needed, there would be possibility for advises and support and no one would find himself alone. It would be important to bring employees together for example first through training. After the "ice is broken" and employees feel more familiar with each other, it is easier to encourage employees to take part on more informal evenings as well. Also employees would become more familiar with the coordinators and barriers to contact them in any matter, would be lower.

When employees enjoy their work and they feel accepted and supported in their work community it is more likely that employee will also stay longer in this job also positive team spirit is transmitted to the customer.

7 The self evaluation

In this chapter I will go through the whole process of writing thesis from the beginning till the end and also through my own experience and my own opinion about how I managed and how could I have succeed more in this work and why.

7.1 The process

Like in every project, getting started was the most difficult part. I was searching information from different sources, but for me the best place was Haaga-Helia library. On some matters like HR there was maybe even too many books and too much information and that made it bit difficult to find the best books for my use but after going through several books, I found the most useful ones for me. Now that I look back the whole process I could have added few more topics to the questionnaire regarding HR. In the end I am still happy with the results of the questionnaire and I feel I was able to focus on the ones that are most important to the company and its current problems.

During this thesis project I definitely learned a lot about myself and what are the best ways to get motivated and my work done. My work in Med Group definitely helped me to keep my mind in the project and see the light at the end of the tunnel. When acknowledging the issues in my daily work and seeing the possible solutions that could be done to make things better and of course positive feedback from other employees concerning my thesis topic, encouraged me to continue.

I started my thesis project by choosing the topic already beginning of the year but wasn't able fully concentrate on it because I had still my other studies and courses in progress. During summer I was finally able to give my thesis a good kick-start and send out my questionnaires. On autumn I decided to reduce my weekly hours at work to be able to finish my thesis on time. In the end this was a good solution and I was able to write very efficiently in a short time. Positive energy and supporting words from my parents, boyfriend and friends helped me throughout the project and to reach my goals.

7.2 The result

I learned a lot new during this process; most of all about myself and which ways are the best to do big writing projects like this in the future. Schedule planning and time management are definitely the key matters I came across with. I was also happy to learn new things about my workplace and colleagues and find out that my help was needed and appreciated. This whole process will be definitely useful for me in the future if I plan to work in the Human Resource Management field.

Objectives of this thesis were to give coordinators valuable information and right tools to improve communication and interaction between employees and help to create a work atmosphere where no one feels alone even though working individually. In my opinion so far half of the objectives are fulfilled because questionnaire came out very informative and useful and hopefully in few months I will be able to see results on if my thesis was helpful also in the matter of creating better work atmosphere.

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<http://www.medgroup.fi>

Attachments

Attachment 1. (PARTS 1-3)

Questions/ claims of the questionnaire

PART 1

1.Sukupuoli*

Pakollinen

mies

nainen

2.Minä vuonna olet aloittanut työskentelemään yrityksessä?*

Pakollinen

Vvvv

3.Koulutus*

Pakollinen

Valitse sopivin vaihtoehdoista

Peruskoulu

Toisen asteen koulutus

Ammattikorkeakoulu/Yliopistotutkinto

Jokin hoito- /sosiaalialan koulutus

Opiskelen tällä hetkellä hoito- /sosiaalialaa

Opiskelen jotain muuta alaa

Muu:

PART 2

Koulutukset:

1.Koulutuksia järjestetään riittävästi*

Pakollinen

Täysin samaa mieltä
Osittain samaa mieltä
Osittain eri mieltä
Täysin eri mieltä

2.Koulutuksien taso vastaa työni vaativuutta*

Pakollinen

Täysin samaa mieltä
Osittain samaa mieltä
Osittain eri mieltä
Täysin eri mieltä

3.Kuinka monta kertaa olet ottanut osaa järjestettäviin koulutuksiin?*

Pakollinen

0
1-3
4-5
6-7
enemmän kuin 7

4.En ole ottanut osaa koulutuksiin koska;

Vastaa tähän vain jos vastasit edelliseen kysymykseen 0 kertaa. Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon.

Koulutukset järjestetään liian kaukana
Niistä ei makseta palkkaa
Ne eivät ole tarpeeksi kiinnostavia
En saa niistä tarpeeksi informaatiota etukäteen
Muu:

5.Koulutukset ovat tarpeeksi monipuolisia*

Pakollinen

Täysin samaa mieltä
Osittain samaa mieltä
Osittain eri mieltä
Täysin eri mieltä

6.Koulutuksista annetaan tarpeeksi informaatiota etukäteen*

Pakollinen

Täysin samaa mieltä
Osittain samaa mieltä
Osittain eri mieltä
Täysin eri mieltä

7.Koen koulutukset hyödylliseksi työssäni *

Pakollinen

Täysin samaa mieltä
Osittain samaa mieltä
Osittain eri mieltä
Täysin eri mieltä

8.Koulutuksista (esim. ensiapukoulutus) olisi hyvä saada todistus*

Pakollinen

Täysin samaa mieltä
Osittain samaa mieltä
Osittain eri mieltä
Täysin eri mieltä

9.Koulutukset jotka kokisin kiinnostavina olisivat

Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon

Ensiapukoulutus

Itsepuolustus

Lastensuojelu

Apuväline- /nostotekniikkakoulutus

Kehitysvammat

Vuorovaikutustaidot

Erilaiset sairaudet

Muu:

10.Parannusehdotuksia *

Pakollinen

Voit lisätä tähän vielä omin sanoin parannusehdotuksia koulutuksiin liittyen

PART 3

Työkaverit

1. Olen työkavereideni kanssa riittävästi tekemisissä*

Pakollinen

Täysin samaa mieltä
Osittain samaa mieltä
Osittain eri mieltä
Täysin eri mieltä

2. Saan riittävästi tukea työkavereiltani *

Pakollinen

Täysin samaa mieltä
Osittain samaa mieltä
Osittain eri mieltä
Täysin eri mieltä

3. Jos Medgroup järjestäisi tapaamisia työntekijöilleen, mieluiten tapaisin työkavereitani*

Pakollinen

Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon

koulutuksessa
saunaillassa
liikunnallisessa virkistyspäivässä
koulutuksessa yhdistettynä saunailtaan
en halua tavata työkavereitani vapaa-ajalla
Muu:

4. Parannusehdotuksia *

Pakollinen

Voit lisätä tähän vielä omin sanoin parannusehdotuksia työkaveritapaamisiin liittyen